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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 002718

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/26/2019

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SUBJECT: MOFA DG UMEMOTO ON SECRET AGREEMENT INVESTIGATION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James P. Zumwalt, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On November 27, Charge d'Affaires discussed MOFA's investigation of the so-called nuclear secret agreements and its possible effects on U.S. nuclear deterrent policy with MOFA North American Affairs Bureau Director General Umemoto. Charge stressed that an important element of U.S. deterrence strategy is to maintain ambiguity with regard to the presence or absence of nuclear arms on U.S. Navy vessels. Adding that the Ambassador is concerned about the direction that this investigation could take, Charge emphasized that this discussion was not simply a Japanese domestic issue but one that could have implications for U.S. strategy in the broader global context, and touches on the interests of several neighboring Asian countries including Korea. He added that the U.S. would be strongly opposed to providing any greater degree of clarity on the presence or absence of nuclear weapons on board our naval vessels.

¶2. (C) Umemoto concurred this is a thorny issue, calling it perhaps "'more difficult than Futenma.'" Noting that he had not yet received instructions to approach the United States formally with regard to statements on tactical nuclear weapons on board U.S. vessels that called in Japanese ports, Umemoto told Charge he was "'concerned'" that the current political leadership did not understand the possible implications of the "'secret agreement'" investigation, which in Umemoto's view, clearly had foreign policy ramifications.

He reacted positively to a suggestion by the Charge for more in-depth briefings for the Minister on U.S. extended deterrence policy and the broader context in which this issue must be addressed.

¶3. (C) In the wake of the investigation's findings, which will likely be published in January, Umemoto said a new formula must be found regarding port calls by U.S. vessels that maintains ambiguity in the U.S. nuclear posture. One possibility would be to reiterate statements made by earlier administrations on the decision not to deploy tactical nuclear weapons on certain classes of vessels. A second approach might be for the U.S. to make a general statement that, for the foreseeable future, the U.S. has no intention of deploying tactical nuclear weapons in Asia. Umemoto said it is important for the U.S. and Japan to continue to consult informally about how to respond to possible calls for more clarity in statements regarding nuclear weapons.

¶4. (C) Umemoto expressed confidence that the ""wise man council"" established to review the internal MOFA document investigation will act in a measured way and reach reasonable conclusions. He stated that most of the members, including Chairman Kitaoka, were well established, respected security experts. However, the group has a very narrow mandate, and will limit its opinion to the contents and implications of the documents turned up during the investigation and declassification policy. That mandate does not extend to policy recommendations, for example regarding the revision of Japan,s three non-nuclear principles. Umemoto also denied media reports that FM Okada had at one point considered suggesting revision of the three principles, adding that it was discussed only in theory, and was deemed politically impossible.

ZUMWALT